

The Sabbath and You

The Ten Commandments

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Bible Verse: Exodus 20:8-11
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We have the privilege this morning of returning to our study of the 10 Commandments and in light of that, I invite you to turn to the book of Exodus 20 where the 10 Commandments are found. There is a parallel version of the 10 Commandments in Deuteronomy 5; we have looked at that in the past. Today we are at the fourth commandment, the sabbath commandment, and we'll be reading from verses 8 through 11 where God's word says,

8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.

Now as we begin, I want to remind you of some important basic matters of spiritual truth and the nature of salvation. We are studying the 10 Commandments but we are not studying them because we believe that obedience can bring us to salvation. We understand that we've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and that there are no good works, there's nothing of obedience that can earn us merit before God. Ephesians 2:8-9 are familiar to all of you, "For it is by grace you've been saved and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, lest any man should boast." Galatians 2:16 and other passages point us in that same direction. Even in the Scripture passage that we read from Acts 16 earlier, we saw this point emphasized when the Philippian jailer said, "Paul, what must I do to be saved?" Paul said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved, you and all of your household." Then he instructed them from the word of God. So we come to salvation, we come to reconciliation to God, we find forgiveness of our sins by faith in Christ alone. Christ alone has the righteousness that God requires. Christ alone has shed blood that God requires for the forgiveness of our sins. And so we start from that particular premise, we understand that we're not looking for the things that we must do in order to be saved, rather we are looking to see what the will of God is and how he wants us to live now that we have come to Christ.

Someone, I did not document the quote when I read it recently, someone said very well, "The law is not a Christ to save us. The law is not a Christ to save us." Rather, you could say, it is a book to instruct us. Once we come to faith in Christ, we find instruction on the will of God, how he wants us to worship him, and how he wants us to relate on a human level and how he wants us to be in our inner man, we find this revealed to us there. We obey these things not because they can save us but rather it is the will of God that he wants us and he has shown us how it is that we are to live in order to please him. That's speaking as believers. For those who are not Christians, the law functions as a convicting mechanism to expose sin and to show that you need a Savior, that the law, Scripture says, is a tutor to lead you to Christ if you are not a Christian. So it's just very very important to understand why we are studying the law and that's a brief summary of it.

Now last time we introduced this fourth, what's known as the fourth commandment, and we stated a key interpretive principle to guide our study: the Bible is the context of the 10 Commandments, by which we mean the Bible helps us understand the implications of the 10 Commandments, the fourth commandment, all of the 10 Commandments, I'm getting a little stepping on top of my own toes here, the Bible helps us to interpret all of the 10 Commandments and that is especially true of the fourth commandment, of the sabbath. If we study through and see what Scripture says about the sabbath, if we study it through and see how the Bible applies the sabbath in the Old and in the New Testaments, then we have a clear idea of what it is trying to communicate to us. And as we said last time, this commandment, it's particularly important for us to do that because there are so many competing opinions and interpretations of the fourth commandment even in theological circles that we are sympathetic with. We talked about that last time and I'm not going to repeat myself here, but what we want to see as I do a brief review of last week and as we go into new material today, here is what we're going to find, here's the way that we're structuring our approach to this commandment. We see the sabbath and Israel, the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. We see the sabbath and the nations in the Old Testament, we looked at that some last time. As we move into things later this morning, we're going to see the sabbath and the church, and then at the end we're going to see the sabbath and you and what the sabbath means for us today and how we are to understand it. And I believe that if we see it in relationship to Israel, to the nations, to the church, and to our own personal lives, I think we'll be in a place where we can understand this profitably even if we have not tried to solve all of the enigmas that interpreters have faced over the centuries.

So what we said last time was this, we saw that Scripture teaches us that the sabbath was a covenant sign to Israel. In the Mosaic law and in the life of the nation Israel, the sabbath served as a sign of God's covenant with the nation and marked them and separated them apart from the nations. Turn over, if you would, to Exodus 31. This is review from last time but it is very important for the overall context and I'm mindful that many who hear this message have not heard the prior message, so a little bit of review is in order.

Exodus 31:12, we see that,

12 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 13 "But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you. 14 'Therefore you are to observe the sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. 15 'For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall surely be put to death. 16 'So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.' 17 "It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased from labor, and was refreshed."

Now we pointed out last time that three times in this brief section we see God emphasizing that he is speaking about the sabbath and this sign being to the sons of Israel. Three times in this brief passage, you see it in verse 13 where he says, "speak to the sons of Israel"; he says it in verse 16, "So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath"; verse 17, "It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever." Now look, that's pretty plain and obvious in my judgment in terms of where God is directing the focus and the emphasis of the sabbath, it's to that Old Testament nation, it's to the Old Testament people, it's a sign given to them before the coming of Christ.

Now that by itself if that was all that we had to go on there might be a sense of opening of saying, "Well, what about the church today? What about the people of God that are outside of Israel and all of that?" But as we saw last time and I'm not going to take the time to review all of this this morning, but by contrast what we saw last time is that God did not impose it on the nations, he didn't even impose it on the people of God before Exodus 16. We saw that Noah and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, they were not commanded to keep the sabbath. The nations were not judged for not keeping the sabbath. God judged the nations for many other violations of his moral law, as we saw from Leviticus 18, Leviticus 20 and other things like that; God was perfectly content to judge nations for the moral law that was written on their hearts but the idea of judging them for not keeping the sabbath is not to be found anywhere in the course of Scripture. We think that is important. We saw further as we went along into the New Testament and when we saw in the New Testament as Gentiles were being brought into the church, you remember the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, they had to resolve how the Gentiles were going to act with believing Jews in the course of the church and they needed to give instructions in order to avoid causing unnecessary offense to the Jews by some of the actions that they would take. Well, if ever there was a time, if ever there was a time for the apostles and the elders of the Jerusalem church to emphasize the importance of observing the sabbath to Gentile Christians, that was the time. If ever there was a time where that was going to be put forth and emphasized as critical for the life of the church going forward, that would be the time for it to have been done. Nothing was said about the sabbath at that point.

So we see that something's going on here and there's a cumulative effect of all of these things. We see when we read about the sabbath when it's first given, we see God emphasizing that it's the sons of Israel. As we let the Bible interpret Scripture, as we let Scripture interpret Scripture, as we read all of the Bible and don't quickly just go from text to application and bypassing interpretation, we find that the nations are not judged for the sabbath, we find the church not being placed, the Gentiles not being placed under the sabbath, we see something is going on here because the sabbath is not being applied to everyone in the same way. As we go forth, we're going to continue to consider that here today, my mere point in this review is simply to help you see that we have to think more carefully about it.

Now some of you, I know, have grown up in traditions where, you know, there were strict rules about what you could do on a Sunday, and you know, and your consciences are still troubled by what can I do on Sunday and what can I not? Can I mow the grass? Can I watch a football game without sinning against God on a Sunday? You know, these have very practical implications and before we get into those kinds of, that kind of detailed consideration of things, we need to just back up and say what does Scripture say about the sabbath, you know, to Israel, to the nations, to the church, and to us. And as I said last time and just kind of putting our view on the table here before we get into it, Truth Community Church does not hold to what could be called the Christian sabbath view, the view that the sabbath applies to Christians today, that the sabbath has been changed from the seventh day to Sunday, and you know, that we're restricted from our activities. We do not hold to that view and I'll talk about that more later in the message. Rather the position of Truth Community Church is what is commonly called the Lord's Day view. We see that there are principles of enduring moral law in the sabbath, and I'll talk about those later, but we distinguish those things that we believe Scripture teaches do not apply today, that there are ceremonial aspects, that there were covenant sign aspects of this for Israel that were never intended to be applied to the church, and so that's what we're going to look at and expand on here today.

So last time we saw the sabbath and Israel, last time we saw the sabbath and the nations, and now here today you could either consider this the third point of a continuation of last week or the first point of today, you take your pick, whatever flips your switch on that is really good for me. We'll call it the first point of today's message, we're going to look at the sabbath and the church. The sabbath and the church. We introduced this briefly last time. I believe that this passage is pretty clear, if you'll turn to Colossians 2. Colossians 2 in your New Testament, Colossians 2, beginning in verse 14 as Paul instructs the church on the proper implications of the redemptive work that Christ has done on our behalf. And actually rather than starting in verse 14, let's go back to verse 13, let's say, and Paul is reviewing salvation history for the church of Colossae. He's reminding them of what Christ has done and the new life that they have in Christ. They've died to the old man. Their sins have been forgiven. They've been given new life. They have the Spirit of God dwelling within them. And Paul is now going to summarize this for them in verses 13 through 15 and then apply the implications of that in the verses that follow so that he says in verse 13,

13 When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, 14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

He's talking about these great spiritual realities that have been accomplished in Christ, the redemptive work at the cross. All of our sins cast upon Christ where he bore the wrath of God on our behalf, and the imagery that our sins were nailed to the cross indicating that they were given a final judgment from God on his Son so that our sins were fully paid for at the cross. Everything that separated us from God, the sins of our thoughts, the sins of our heart, the sins of our mouth, the sins of our deeds, all of our cold prayers, all of our rebellion, all of our false theology, all of that, God laid all of that on Christ and struck him and punished him for all of our misdeeds. Christ paid for our sins. He died for us. He paid a penal, he gave a penal substitution in our place, he suffered the penalty that the law required. This is the greatness of Christian salvation. This is the heart of redemption, these great eternal spiritual realities have all been accomplished for us in Christ and now he is at the right hand of God in heaven where he represents us before a holy God. As our great High Priest, our names are written on his royal robe and he represents us before God having done everything that is necessary to redeem us and to accomplish the forgiveness of our sins. These are the greatness of things. This is in a high spiritual realm far beyond anything earthly that could ever be done. Christ has acted on our behalf. He has done what God requires for us. He has fulfilled the law both in its righteous requirements and in requiring what the law's penalty is. Christ has satisfied all of it for us.

Now Paul says in light of that, in verse 16, look there with me, he says,

16 Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day 17 things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

Paul says, "Don't let anyone judge you by the Jewish calendar." Let me say that again. I like to make this point for many reasons. "Don't let anyone judge you based on anything related to the Jewish calendar, their triannual feasts, their monthly festivals, their new moon days, or the sabbath." He goes from that which is annual to that which is monthly to that which is weekly and says, "Don't let anyone judge you according to the Jewish calendar. That's not what it is given to you for. That's not the purpose of it. Those things do not bind you in Christ and therefore no one is to judge you by them." And it was a continual problem in the early church that Jewish believers still somewhat behold to their prior familiarity with the Mosaic law tried to impose this on Gentile believers and said, "You need to be circumcised in order to be saved. You need to come through Moses before you can come to Christ." And Paul says, "No, don't listen to any of that. Don't let your conscience be brought into bondage as a result of that. There's no need for it, indeed

it's wrong to do that because that is an attack on the sufficiency of the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ." He had just said earlier in the chapter which we had read, Christ has accomplished all of this on our behalf. "It is finished," Jesus cried out from the cross. The law has been fulfilled. The veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom indicating that by an act of God what previously separated men from him, by an act of God, God has removed that veil and you can enter through the one who was just crucified and those great cosmic events, the earthquake, bodies coming out of the grave, the temple curtain being torn from top to bottom, all indicating that there has been a massive change that has taken place in association with the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now as a result of that, what we are to see and what we are to do and what you are to do if you are to be saved, and what you are to do as a Christian is that you are to have those things so clearly set in your mind that you understand – watch this – you understand that your spiritual rest is found in Christ, not in an observance that was intended for the Jews before Christ came. Let me say that again: you are to find your rest in Christ, not in complying with sabbath regulations from the Old Testament that were intended for the Jews. That is just very crucial and we're going to see this more as we go along.

So for the church, for the church today since the coming of the Holy Spirit, for us today standing as Gentile believers, Paul says no one is to judge us about such things. And so just as a practical implication because there are people who run around and try to do these things and to bind consciences with these things, if someone comes to you and starts talking about Old Testament regulations or Jewish feasts, Jewish observances, and we as Christians are supposed to observe these things, you should understand by now that when that is heard you are to reject it. You are to turn away from that and to reject it and say, "No. That is not for the church today. This is not to bind my conscience. Everything that the law requires has been fulfilled for me by the Lord Jesus Christ and I rest in Him, I rest in what He has done, not in what I do." And the fulfillment, the satisfaction, all that the law requires is found in Christ.

Paul says we are not to be judged about such things. Later on or you could say looking at it spatially, earlier in the New Testament Paul had said that observing one day above another is a matter of indifference. Look at Romans 14 where the Apostle Paul says in Romans 14:5, he says,

5 One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. 7 For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 8 for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

This is all about being in Christ, in other words. It's not about observing things or observing particular days or not. Verse 9,

9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. 10 But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. 11 For it is written, "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD." 12 So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God. 13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.

He says you can observe the day or you cannot observe the day. One man sees a day being more special than another, the other man sees every day alike. Paul says this is a matter of indifference. Don't get wrapped up in this. Don't stumble under this. Don't place weights on other believers that their conscience does not require. Don't hold them up by things that are simply matters of your personal conviction or personal preference. Don't do that.

So you see in Colossians 2, don't let anyone judge you about a sabbath day. You see in Romans 14, Paul saying again whether you view a day as different or you view every day alike, it's not a matter of importance. And so the cumulative weight of everything that we have said here last Sunday, the review today, and the things that we've added here this morning, the cumulative weight of all of that testimony leads to this conclusion as I understand Scripture and as our church holds: the Old Testament sabbath rules and the seventh day of rest are not part of God's eternal moral law. The sabbath rules and the seventh day of rest are not part of God's eternal moral law to be followed and to be obeyed in the way that the other aspects of the 10 Commandments are obviously to be intended. Today it's obvious, it's obvious that the laws against murder and adultery and stealing and dishonesty and coveting, it's obvious that those things are still in effect because as we looked at one of our messages a few months ago, all of those things are repeated in the New Testament. We see the New Testament confirming the enduring validity of those aspects of the moral law, we find something different in respect to the sabbath and so that is the basis upon which we see these things as we do. The sabbath rules, the seventh day of rest, had a crucial import to distinguish the nation of Israel from those which surrounded them but I believe it's clear, I find it compelling personally by what we have looked at that these things were not for all men for all time, and they were not, therefore, intended to bind the conscience of New Testament believers. They were not meant to bind the conscience of the church.

Now and remember, remember that the sabbath is calling for seventh day worship. That was crucial to what was being said. That was crucial to Israel and God emphasized it for them. If – stay with me here, stay with me, you know, we're dealing with some difficult issues here – if the sabbath could not be altered, if the sabbath was meant to apply universally for all time to all peoples, if that were true then the seventh day would be integral to an understanding of that and therefore you would think the seventh day would have an abiding significance even after the resurrection of Christ, if that were true. But

watch this, as you read the New Testament, you find that the early church after the coming of the Holy Spirit, I might add, the early church easily switched away from worship on Saturdays by the seventh day week as we know it, to the first day of the week. They easily switched from the seventh day to the first day of the week and I want to show you the text that help us to see that. There's three that we'll look at.

Look in the book of Acts 20. In Acts 20:7, Luke who is the author of the book of Acts, says this,

7 On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.

They were gathered on the first day of the week. Now hold that in your mind, turn to the book of 1 Corinthians 16 as Paul is giving instruction to the church on how it is to function. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2. We saw it in Acts 20:7, the first day of the week. 1 Corinthians 16:1,

1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also.

This is looking like something that's intended to be universal for the church. Paul says, "I've said this to other churches, now I'm saying it to you," and it's recorded for us here in the pages of Scripture. This coming from an apostle of Jesus Christ, here we find something that is stated to the church, not to the sons of Israel, something that is meant for the church to do. What does he say? Verse 2, he says,

2 On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come.

He says, "When you gather together on the first day of the week, I want you to take a collection together." That's one of the reasons that we have offering boxes just outside our double doors there and let me just take this side opportunity. We have such a generous church, we have such generous people in this church that our needs are met and beyond and it's appropriate for me to just on behalf of the elders to just take a moment to thank you for the stunning generosity of this body. God is meeting our needs abundantly through you and I just want to thank you for everything that all of you do to contribute to that. We have no needs. We have no need to pass offering plates or anything like that or to hire consultants to help us run funds because you are all so spontaneously generous and I thank you from the bottom of my heart and I give thanks to God for all of you in this particular aspect of our church life. I'm grateful and it honors the Lord that our church is like that. Thank you.

Coming back to the sabbath, you see Paul saying do it on the first day of the week. Now along with that if you look to the book of Revelation 1:9, the Apostle John says,

9 I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day,

Not on the sabbath, on the Lord's day, on that day by which, watch this, on that day by which we remember the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord was raised on the first day. He was crucified on Friday, raised on Sunday, and so we meet together not in response to a sabbath sign to Israel, we meet in response to commemorate the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. And when that occurred, the emphasis in all three of these texts is gathering on the first day of the week. Since God gave the law to Moses, after that time is what I mean by the word "since," after that something has intervened. Christ intervened with his life, with his death, with his resurrection, and there is a whole new focus brought to our worship. Not the seventh day sign to Israel, our focus is the death and resurrection and ascension of our glorious Lord and that he has fulfilled everything that is necessary for us to be reconciled to God. So we are remembering something different at the church, as the church we are remembering Christ in a way that had not yet occurred, that had not yet been revealed when the Old Testament was given.

So the focus of our worship, the timing of our worship has changed, and if you look over at Hebrews 10, this does not refer specifically to the first day but it gives us a sense of what our focus is to be as the church when we gather together. It is not, it is not the restriction on activities but rather we focus on something else, something different since the coming of Christ. In verse 24, the writer of Hebrews says, "let us consider." Hebrews 10, I hear your pages rustling. I'll wait. You know, it's easy for the speaker to keep up because he's prepared this, you know, in advance. He's worked on this. He knows where he's going. You know, for people in the audience, speakers need to slow down because you're hearing it for the first time.

Hebrews 10:24, Paul says,

24 ... let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,
25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

As we come together for worship now, we come together to honor God through the preaching of his word in line with Ephesians 5:18-21, to sing songs and spiritual songs and psalms with one another, you know, and we're focusing on, we're focusing on that, and as you see here as we gather together there's an aspect of fellowship where we come together and, in a sense, we have a spiritual work to do when we gather together to be mindful of our opportunity and responsibility to encourage one another as we gather together. The focus is completely different. The focus is completely different from what was imposed upon Israel under those seventh day rules that we saw from the Old Testament. We gather together to preach the word. We gather together for fellowship. We gather together to practice the ordinances that Christ gave to the church, baptism and

communion. We gather together and we recognize there's a need for prayer and so we pray together. This is a different focus. That is the object of our attention on Sunday are those spiritual aspects, that spiritual work given to the church in the New Testament since the resurrection of Christ, and that has a far greater significance than what you do or do not do on the 24 hour period of a Sunday day.

So with all of those things said, let me just make an important side note that relates to our church life and to our confession. As most of you know, certainly all of you members know, our church holds to what's known as the 1689 Baptist Confession, and we believe that it is a wonderful expression of the system of truth that reflects what the Bible teaches. It's a long document yet it's still a human document, right? Well, in chapter 22 in paragraph 7 and 8 of the 1689 Confession, you'll find that it upholds a Christian sabbath view and gives different directions on behavior of believers on a Sunday and that is different from the Lord's day view that we have been considering here over the past couple of weeks. Let me just say this briefly for the sake of the life of our church and to lay down something that can be referred to in the future if need be: our church does not enforce those two sections. What I mean by that is that we do not require perspective members to affirm those two paragraphs of the 1689 Confession. It would be rather self-contradictory, wouldn't it, if we required you to affirm that which we have disagreed with from the pulpit. And so we respect the 1689 Confession entirely but Scripture is our final authority and so we do not require members to affirm that section.

Now stay with me, follow me here. In keeping with what Paul said in Romans 14 that some regard one day higher than another, others regard every day alike, we would not forbid somebody from holding to a Christian sabbath view and practicing it privately where someone wanted to cease from all of their labors, and as the 1689 Confession says, to give the whole day over to meditation and reading Scripture and ceasing from any earthly engagements. We wouldn't forbid someone from doing that. As a practical matter – follow me very carefully – as a practical matter, there is something to be said for giving your time over to meditation and things like that. There's something to be said for that but it's not a biblical mandate that binds your conscience that you must do or you're sinning against God. That's the distinction. That is the distinction and so we don't forbid people from holding to that privately but what we would say is this, is that someone who holds to that privately should not try to advocate that within our body and try to persuade and contradict the church pulpit, or to contradict, you know, what we've said here. You can hold that privately and practice that if you wish and still be a member of Truth Community Church, but you cannot make that a point of division by insisting that your conscience become the standard by which others live their lives. That's the distinction that we hold here and that brings us to the conclusion of our section on the sabbath and the church and, you know, hopefully this has been helpful to you. It's been helpful to me to study these things and to work through them all together.

Well, let's go to our second point for this morning. We've said the sabbath and the church, let's consider the sabbath and you, and how would you appropriate then, what are then the enduring principles that are left, what does the sabbath instruction from Exodus 20, what does that have to teach us today? And this becomes very very rich. This points us into

things of great consequence for our lives, great consequence for your life in a way that is not a restrictive and what I believe, an unbiblical restriction on your conscience but rather things that have great import for the kind of person that you are to be, and also where it is that you look for rest. Where is it that we look for rest?

Well, let's look at the original text again, Exodus 20:8-11. Let me just read this for us again as we come to the point of, "Well, what does this mean for us today?" And in looking at it from this perspective, what is it that we can find that is in this commandment that the New Testament would affirm and reinforce to us? When we let Scripture interpret Scripture, what is it that we would find that is affirmed and clearly enunciated in the New Testament as an affirmation of what we see in Exodus 20? What are the principles even if the language itself is not mentioned? Okay, that's what we want to do.

Exodus 20:8, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy." There's a fascinating contrast, there are two different themes that are woven together in this commandment. You find it emphasizing the importance of work. You shall labor and you shall do all your work and yet at the same time alongside that there's this principle of rest and ceasing from labor.

Look at it this way, the sabbath and you and I'm going to give you two subpoints here as we draw this all to a conclusion. First subpoint, the principle of work; second subpoint we could say the person of Christ or the principle of rest, okay? There's work and there's rest. How would the New Testament help us to understand this? Well, when it comes to the matter of working and this really needs to be emphasized in our society where over especially over the past 50 years since the presidency of Lyndon Johnson and going back even further to the presidency of Franklin Roosevelt, we need to understand something really important here. It is not, it is not the biblical responsibility of government to support men in their lives and to provide for them their daily necessities. An able-bodied man is supposed to biblically provide for himself and the increasing reliance that so many large segments of our society has on government programs and government handouts and government things like this, these are things that we need to rethink from a perspective of our individual lives and see where our primary responsibility lies.

With that in mind, I want you to turn to 2 Thessalonians 3. I'm going to read an extended passage of Scripture here. We have just come to assume that government is responsible to provide for us. That is not the biblical view of things and when I say "we," I mean in our broad society generally speaking. I'm making a polemic against a culture that's grown over decades and people are born into it and never have a thought of anything different because it's just assumed by the way that things are done. But let us look at this from the perspective of a New Testament believer and what it means for us.

2 Thessalonians 3:6,

6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, 8 nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; 9 not because we do not have the right to this [meaning that as servants of Christ he's entitled to receive his living from his ministry, that's all that he's saying there, he says,] not because we do not have the right to this but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example. 10 For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. 11 For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. 12 Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. 13 But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good.

So God commands us, God commands us to work, to eat the fruit of our own labors, to provide for ourselves so that – and let me emphasize this – so that able-bodied men should be working and this is part of Christian life, this is part of a Christian approach to sanctification. Christians are to have a good work ethic and use their time and their hands for productive labors and that is consistent with the sabbath saying for six days you are to work, you are to labor, you are to provide for yourself and for your family. This is the responsibility of Christian men and those that are able to work should work.

Now we realize that there are people maybe later in life, you know, their health has declined and they're not able to do this, they need assistance, we're happy to understand that situation and realize that there is assistance needed there and that is fine. Jesus told adult children of parents, he said, you know, he rebuked the Pharisees for giving people an out from supporting their parents, say, "Well, just say it's all given over to God and then you don't have to worry about it." Jesus rebuked them and said, "No, that's not consistent with honoring your parents." So we understand that and we're talking to able-bodied men and able-bodied women that we're to work and not lay around and be lazy and spend all of our time doing unproductive things.

Now so our hands are to work, our hands to labor, and that is important to establish here but our souls, our souls need rest of a different kind. When God rested in Genesis, it's important to understand he was not tired. God does not get tired. Isaiah 40:28 says, "The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth Does not become weary or tired." And so the sabbath which is premised on the Lord's rest after the sixth day of creation, it's premised on that, understand that God rested – this has a very important spiritual point that we're making here – God rested because he had finished his work.

God's work in creation was done and therefore he rested from it. He rested because that aspect of his work was finished.

Now what does that have to do with the sabbath? The sabbath, as we saw, makes a point, sabbath is premised on that aspect of rest. What then is the sabbath pointing us to when it comes to this matter of rest? And that brings the second subpoint of the sabbath and you, it brings us to the person of Christ. It brings us to the person of Christ. The principle of rest in the sabbath is designed to instruct us not about working but of resting and what that means for us is this, we've already talked about this, we already set this principle in motion at the beginning of the message, we rest from our spiritual works, we rest from the notion of trying to earn the favor of God with what we do and with our obedience. We rest from our works and find our rest in Christ. Think about the nature of Old Testament worship. Hebrews talks about this. When it came to their religion, when it came to their ceremonies, they were never done. They brought sacrifices again and again. They burned incense again and again. They came to the priests again and again and there was just this laborious monotony to the repetition of it all indicating that full atonement had not yet been made, indicating that that work had to continue to go on. God graciously gave them the sabbath to stimulate their meditation on his finished work but the repetition of it all taught the people to look to God and to look to him for rest.

Now look over at the book of Hebrews here, Hebrews 4 where you can see this point, you can see this point stated. Hebrews in this book that is talking about the superiority of Christ, the superiority of the sacrifice of Christ toward everything in the Old Testament, in Hebrews 4:4 we find this,

4 ... He has said somewhere concerning the seventh day: "AND GOD RESTED ON THE SEVENTH DAY FROM ALL HIS WORKS"; 5 and again in this passage, "THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST." 6 Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience, 7 He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS." 8 For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. 9 So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.

But what is the sabbath rest of which he speaks?

10 For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.

Here's what he's saying, beloved, he said David speaking after Moses, speaking after Joshua, speaks about a rest that is to come. He's speaking about something future indicating that the sabbath rest was not the final rest that the people of God were to look to. They were to look for a different kind of rest, find their sabbath, as it were, in something else, something where they can rest from their works. For us, we rest from our

works as that which we rely upon to gain entrance to God, we rest from that recognizing that someone else has done the work for us. Christ has done the work. Christ is the greater rest. Christ is our sabbath place of rest because Christ has done the work for us so we rest in him. When we come to Christ, we receive him – this is a definition of faith according to the Westminster Confession – we receive Christ and we rest in him. We are no longer trying to earn favor from God, earn good points with God. We're not trying to do that by our works anymore, we're at rest in Christ because he's done all of the work that God requires and he did it on our behalf. So salvation is not found, salvation is not found in work but in God's provision of rest. God gave Christ, Christ did the work, he's now ascended on high indicating the work is finished, and we rest in him.

Our friend Phil Johnson put it this way, he says, "The sabbath pictures the rest we obtain through salvation. It is not a rest we earn by our own works, it is a rest that is graciously given to us through Christ who has done all the saving work on our behalf."

Beloved, when God instituted the sabbath, spiritual rest, the completion of the work was still future as shown by the continual repetition of the sacrifices in the Old Testament economy. The ceremonies, the regulations, all of that showed the sabbath wasn't finished. In Christ now, the sacrifice is done. In Christ, the work is fulfilled. In Christ, God accepts, God accepts his Son, God is pleased with his Son and Christ's work is finished so that if we are in Christ, the work of earning favor with God is over and we find our rest in him. And so in Christ we don't need the shadows of repeated sacrifices, in Christ we do not need the day that marked them, in Christ we do not need rules to regulate us on Sunday that don't apply to the rest of the week. We don't need that because the work is done. The substance of the sabbath belongs to Christ. Christ is our sabbath rest.

Look over at Matthew 11 and we'll close with this. Matthew 11. This gives you a whole new perspective on this familiar passage and for those of you that are plagued by a guilty conscience knowing that you've sinned against God, those of you that are afraid to die because you don't in your heart really know what's going to happen to you, those of you that come from systems of religion that tell you to work, work, work, tell you you can be good enough to go to heaven, all that's false. Listen instead in light of everything that we've said, I know this has been a long complicated message, but in light of everything that we've said, hear now afresh the words of Christ in Matthew 11:28 and 29 where Jesus says, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you," what? "I'll give you rest. You'll find your rest not in the sabbath, you'll find your rest in Me." You'll find your rest in Christ. He says, verse 29, "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Christ calls us to come to him and find rest for our souls, find the fulfillment of everything that God requires. Come to Christ and find a complete assurance that you have been accepted by a holy God. Come to Christ and know that there's no fear of anything, of any false place called purgatory. Come to Christ and know that there is a full promise of eternal bliss and an eternal heaven with ages without end, never to be taken away, never to be threatened. Come to Christ and find that everything God requires has

already been provided. Find your rest in him, not in a recurring observance of a particular day of the week. My friend, if you are resting in Christ alone to put an end to your trying to earn favor with God by your works, the purpose of the sabbath has been fulfilled in you and you can give glory to Christ and live with him, live in him in peace with a conscience cleansed from undue burdens and with confidence that he will keep you all the way to heaven. Let me tell you, that's rest.

Let's pray.

Dear Christ, we honor You. We come collectively to You for rest. We come individually to You for rest. We honor You. We pray for those still searching for the spiritual home for their souls, Father. May they find the spiritual home, the rest for their souls in Christ alone. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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